

APPENDIX B

**Written Comments
Received at the June 1, 2005
Public Meeting**

June 1, 2005

Highway 69 public hearing

Testimony of Terry Minow, 502 Lower Valley Road, Boulder, MT 59632, in opposition to re-routing of Highway 69

Good evening. My name is Terry Minow. My family ranches at 502 Lower Valley Road, which is 10 miles below the white bridge on the county road.

I support improving the safety of Highway 69, but I am opposed to re-routing of HWY 69, **and** I am opposed to rebuilding the highway in a way that will increase traffic and the speed of traffic on Highway 69.

My opposition is based on three major concerns.

First, I am concerned that neither one of these proposals will improve safety. The problem of safety on the highway is due to excessive speed, and to the number of trucks using the road. If you make the road wider and take out the curves, you will actually make it less safe. The traffic is already too fast—these proposed changes will speed it up that much more. Deer, elk, and other animals cross the back road every morning and night to water in the Boulder River. Moving the highway will also increase animal-vehicle wrecks.

Secondly, I am concerned about the impact on our rural lifestyle. Moving the highway will make it difficult for ranchers to move cows and equipment, which they do every day, up and down lower valley road, or the back road, as we call it. People in the area use the back road to bike, walk, run, ride horses, take a Sunday drive—and teach their kids how to drive. The school bus stops along the back road to pick up kids. Ranchers & neighbors also use the back road when the highway is icy, or when meeting a semi truck in a blinding blizzard is too much to handle.

Third, it is important to maintain the beauty of the existing highway, and I don't think that is considered in your proposals. Highway 69 is a gorgeous road, especially through the canyon. The trees and foliage in the fall are spectacular. I don't want to see the trees and vegetation stripped out of the area in order to make the road a big wide expanse of pavement.

I suggest the state consider the following ideas immediately, in the interest of improving safety and minimizing accidents:

Beef up enforcement of the speed limit on Highway 69. Ticket the truckers and other drivers who are speeding and passing on curves and over hills. Do whatever it takes to slow down traffic.

Ban semi trucks from using Highway 69. The interstate was built for high speed and commercial traffic. An exception should be made for local truck traffic.

Lower the speed limit for trucks. There is no way a truck can drive through the canyon at 60 miles an hour and be safe. Do a speed assessment.

The goal of improving the safety of HWY 69 is an admirable goal, one we support. However, I believe these proposals will have the unintended consequence of actually making HWY 69 less safe.

I ask you to refocus the construction projects on the goal of improving the safety of Highway 69 while maintaining the rural economy, lifestyle, and beauty of the Boulder Valley.

I very much appreciate the opportunity to comment on these proposals. Thank you for your time and attention.

MONTANA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Comment Form

Project: BOULDER-SOUTH
Project Number: STPP 69-1(9)22
Control Number: CN2019

You are invited to make your comments on this form and leave it with the meeting officials or take it with you and mail it to Jeff Ebert, District Administrator, Montana Department of Transportation, PO Box 3068, Butte, MT 59702-3068 or E-mail the consultant djames@hkminc.com by July 15, 2005.

Please indicate your name, address and affiliation (if any) below. Thank you for your interest and comments on this project. Feel free to use the back and/or additional sheets of paper if necessary.

NAME AND ADDRESS: Megan Bullock
Box 364
Boulder, MT 59632

COMMENTS: With communities in Montana growing;
more people are on the states highways. The
safety levels on the current highway are compromised
in the winter months when snow & ice melt
slowly along the river & through the shaded areas.
Moving the road east of the river will allow
the sun full access to road surfaces and improve
melting. In addition, the farmers & ranchers who
are most affected have access also to Highway
69 so they will simply just need to change
their main entrance. The most logical &
economical solution is to use the alternate
route.

Boulder, Montana
June 1, 2005

TO: MONTANA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

RE: OBJECTIONS TO HIGHWAY CONSTRUCTION ON EAST BOULDER
VALLEY ROAD

My name is Allen LeMieux. My wife and I live at 39 Hubbard Lane,
Boulder, Montana 59632. My telephone number is 406-225-3359.

Our home is adjacent to what is popularly known as "The Red Bridge" which lies athwart the Boulder River and, as I understand it, right next to the line of a new highway proposed to be built along the East Boulder Valley Road. For the past thirty years we have lived here in peace, beauty and tranquility, enjoying a great Montana life, raising nine children and now having twenty-four grandchildren. Not only is this place our chosen home but the place of their choosing for fishing, swimming, camping, picnicking, horseback riding, cattle raising and playing in the sandbox. One million dollars would not substitute for its value to us and our family in personal value alone. We hate to think that we could lose all of this – along with the aesthetic destruction of the entire area – for what? To avoid a bit of rock blasting along the existing highway? To avoid a wet-lands substitute land purchase of a few acres? To create two parallel highways? To destroy safe foot, horseback, cattle, bicycle travel? To create incessant noise pollution? To block or retard our easy access to our mountains, streams and woodlands? What kind of planning is this that would wreck so much to accomplish so little?

Can it seriously be taken that this proposed highway must be built as a public necessity? We doubt it very much. By the way the Boulder River lies upon a geologic fault line. Would that impact your decision to build two more bridges there?

The present road, for the most part, is built upon the old railroad bed that for years carried trains to Elkhorn. Surely, with improvements for safety, it could carry all of the traffic of Montana without faltering.

The Montana Department of Transportation news release in the Boulder Monitor says that usage on the present highway now runs from 1,500 to 1,600 vehicles daily. 17% of this travel is attributed to semi-truck hauling. We do have interstate highways nearby. But consider this: There are 1,440 minutes in a 24 hour day. According to your own figures, this means that on average a vehicle of some sort will fly past our home every 54 seconds! Further, of those vehicles, it

will be a semi-truck every 5½ minutes! What effect would you expect this to have on a peaceful, quiet, neighborhood? How much more traffic will follow in coming years?

The homes here are located where they are precisely, mainly at least, because of their remoteness from a busy, noisy, smelly, necessary but obnoxious, highway. I do not protest your proposal for myself alone. My neighbors must also continue to live in the atmosphere of peace and beauty they have worked most of their lives to own. What you propose is the destruction of us all!

Our message to you is clear enough; keep out!

Sincerely yours,


Allen Lemieux

TO: *cc: Darryl James, HKM*
CC: Montana Department of Transportation

FROM: David LeMieux *DL*
39 Hubbard Lane
Boulder, MT 59632

RE: Proposed Alternate Route for Highway 69, East of Boulder, MT

DATE: June 1, 2005

Recent news that the MDOT is considering rerouting Hwy 69, south of Boulder, MT, has perhaps all-of-the-local-residents concerned (myself included) about the impacts upon the valley that this action would cause. Although we acknowledge the wisdom of considering all options during early planning stages; we rural residents strongly request the MDOT rule-out this hwy rerouting option early in the planning process due numerous adverse impacts this rerouting option would have on the area.

MDOT has indicated that widening the existing route would cost \$16MM and using the alternate route would cost \$15MM. MDOT cites, construction of solid subgrade in the valley-floor land to contribute to the higher cost for widening the existing route. However, the most logical alternate route would be to bypass 5.5 miles of the existing route (from MP 31.5 to MP 36), but the alternate route would still cross ~1.9 miles of valley-floor land! Considering that the existing valley-floor highway is along solid ground for ~0.6 miles, the total area affected by this 1.9 miles of new roadway across valley-floor land is identical to the area affected by widening the existing route and of course saves construction of 2 bridges and ~3.5 miles of bench-land highway. This demonstrates that the proposed alternate route will actually cost *significantly* more than widening the existing route.

Note also that the existing route and alternate route lengths are both ~5.5 miles in length.

Additionally, the alternate route cause other impact that I hope encourage you to abandon rerouting plans for Hwy 69:

1. Number of egress points: The existing route is on the valley floor and due to flood-plane building regulations; this land cannot be used for future housing development. In contrast, the proposed alternate route crosses through land of at least three ranches and adjacent to numerous existing homes. Also, there are numerous landowners of properties near the alternate route. The past 20 years clearly shows this trend toward rural housing in this area and this suggests that in the future (20 to 50 years from now) even more homes will be built in this area. Therefore, a hwy reconstructed along the alternate route would have more rural traffic egress points—both upon construction and with increasing numbers in the future. This is a safety concern for both rural and non-rural traffic. To illustrate this safety concern, the proposed alternate route would contain numerous school bus stops—and these stops would

increase in number as more homes were built in the future, but in contrast, the existing route would always have very few school bus stops.

2. Business Impacts—Part 1: The existing hwy route passes directly in front of the historic Bolder Hot Springs Spa and Hotel. The alternate route would bypass the hotel, likely reducing business to this establishment. In addition the alternate route would impact ranch use on the existing Lower Valley and Hubbard Lane roads. Ranchers use these roads to periodically drive cattle and to haul hay on a daily basis. These ranchers would also lose valuable ranch land if the hwy was rerouted. Mixing ranch use with hwy travel is also another safety concern for Hwy 69 travel.
3. Business Impacts—Part 2: The alternate hwy route would likely be about 5.5 miles in length; of this, ~1.9 miles of the alternate hwy route would cross valley-floor land that is similar in nature to the land the existing hwy crosses. The MDOT indicates that the primary purpose of the alternate route is to prevent hwy construction over valley-floor land, but the area covered by the ~1.9 mile stretch is nearly equivalent in total area affected by widening the existing route. The proposed route would also travel over ~3.5 miles of the existing Lower Valley Road and much adjacent lands (to reduce grade elevation changes). Thus, the proposed alternate route will in fact use a significant amount of ranch land.
4. Recreational Use: The Lower Valley Road and the Hubbard Lane roads are used by rural residents, Boulder residents, and area residents for recreational uses such as walking, running, cycling and to access fishing and hunting areas. The proposed alternate hwy route would decrease, or eliminate, the recreational enjoyment value of these roads. This is yet another safety concern... to illustrate this safety concern, the proposed alternate route would pass near or over the existing historic Red Bridge—a location frequented by sportspersons who access the river for fishing and by unsupervised children who use the bridge for a bicycle parking lot, diving platform, sunbathing and general hang-out.
5. Rural Living Environment: Rural residents have moved to this area specifically for a rural lifestyle. However, the alternate route would effectively route hwy travel nearby and in some cases—immediately adjacent to—existing homes. According to MDOT data, this equates to an average of one vehicle passing by every 54 seconds and of these about every fifth vehicle is a semi-truck. This noise pollution would wreck the living environment these residents have spent their lives searching to find and working to purchase.
6. Infrastructure: The proposed alternate route requires building two new bridges to cross the Boulder River. In addition to building two new bridges, the existing NEW bridges (commonly known as the historic Red Bridge and the White Bridge) would likely be removed. The loss of this existing infrastructure seems 'unfortunate' in terms of long-term planning and particularly since rural residents spent a significant effort preserving the now historic Red Bridge.

7. Hwy Winter Road Conditions: The proposed alternate route will cross the river twice and have several uphill and downhill grades and likely more corners. This is more concern for safety because bridges are notorious for icing conditions and grades are more difficult for travelers to negotiate in winter conditions.
8. "Wetland" Considerations: Highway planners may be concerned that widening the existing Hwy 69 route, instead of using the alternate route, would affect so called wetlands. Along this section of roadway are age-old irrigation ditches that line the hwy on both sides. In many places, the ditches effectively form the borrow pits of the roadway, with the roadway slope comprising one side of the ditch. These irrigation ditches channel water to fields from spring to late fall. Local ranchers routinely clean and maintain these ditches using excavation equipment. *Is such a practice consistent with our current thoughts and management of what we all know are true wetlands?* Reasonably speaking these so called "wetlands" exist entirely due to irrigation practices. Widening the existing hwy route will only move the ditches outward to accommodate a widened roadway. This merely *relocates* rather than eliminates the so-called "wetlands."

The brief outline provided above is only a synopsis of impacts rerouting the Hwy 69 would have on the local area. Residents of the valley clearly do not want the proposed alternate route and request the MDOT to rule-out this option early in the planning process.

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Please indicate your name, address and affiliation (if any) below. Thank you for your interest and comments on this project. Feel free to use the back and/or additional sheets of paper if necessary.

NAME AND ADDRESS: Glenn Marx
Whitehall Ledger (weekly newspaper)
Box 1169 Whitehall
59759
whledger@a14-tch.com

COMMENTS: You're going to have to make the existing
road work. The Narayan route isn't going to
work and is not acceptable to nearly all or all
local residents.

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NAME AND ADDRESS: Cheryl Martin

8 Hubbard Lane

Boulder, MT. 59632

COMMENTS: I am opposed to the construction of a new route. The alternate route would have huge impacts on the local ranchers, would impact wildlife that cross the county road. The alternate route would impact the same amount of wetlands as the existing alignment.

I suggest the best alternative is to keep the existing highway corridor, make spot fixes, and lower the speed limit in the corridor from the Elkhorn turnoff north to Boulder and enforce the lower speed limit. It seems there is technology available to minimize impacts to the Boulder River wetlands. Staff the weigh station and enforce the speed limit on the entire highway length.

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NAME AND ADDRESS: Tresa V. Smith, P.O. Box 27
Boulder, MD. 59632 - Boulder Valley Rancher
and Environmentalist email: tresa@bvalleyranch.com

Plans for widening and road change are
an intrusion to a way of Montana life.

COMMENTS: I am opposed to changing the route of
Highway 69. The Boulder Valley is a narrow valley
between two mountain ranges. A change in route would
significantly impact the agricultural and wildlife
environment. Not only would the lives of the people who
have worked and lived in this area since their families arrived
as pioneers, be economically altered, it would also endanger
the wildlife which use this river valley as a corridor and
the fish and fowl which depend on the river and wetlands.
It would ultimately effect the many hunters and anglers
who would want to continue recreation and enjoyment in this
area.

Years ago a argument was made to make the interstate
go through this area. After significant discussion and
argument, it was decided to put this highway through
Idaho and Butte. Nonetheless, truckers continue to use 69
as a main route. The problem is their use of this
secondary highway as a main route. Yes the accident
rate may be high for trucks. But the volume of trucking
on such a secondary route is excessive. Speed limits -
high stations - should be considered as an
option - not just pandering to trucks and traffic.

June 1, 2005
Jeffery M. Ebert, Butte District Administrator
Butte Dist. Office
3751 Wynne Ave.
Butte, Mt 5702-3068

Dear Mr. Ebert,

This letter is in response to the recent proposal by the MDT to move Highway 69 to the Lower Valley Road.

Our family ranch has been operating in the Boulder Valley for 15 years. We are opposed to rerouting the highway for the following reasons:

- *The current Lower Valley Road is the primary route for agricultural movement.* Our family and neighbors use the county road to drive cattle from pasture to pasture. In addition to people on horseback, we also frequently drive slow moving vehicles such as tractors, swathers and 4-wheelers. Changing the highway would make our daily operations extremely hazardous and dangerous for travelers on 69.
- *Negative Impact to Wildlife.* As members of the Block Management Program we enjoy seeing healthy game populations and successful hunters. The current low traffic road allows adequate wildlife movement from the foothills of the Elkhorn Mountains to the water of the Boulder River. A paved highway with stronger and higher fences would disrupt animal migration (causing herds to leave altogether) and genetically fragment animal populations (decrease strength and viability of herds).
- *Removal or alteration of three irrigation ditches.* If the highway is moved then the white bridge will need to be replaced and realigned which would take out two of our headgates and completely alter the flow of all three ditches. These ditches and headgates are not only built and maintained with our time and money, but are also our primary source for irrigating hay fields which feed the cows through the winter.
- *The removal of the Red Bridge.* The Red Bridge has been a long time favorite swim hole for our family and friends. We highly value this spot as one of the only recreation areas in the Valley.

Thank you for your time,

Compton Ranch

Gene Compton and family ~ 747 Lower Valley rd. Boulder Mt. 59632



Red Rock Valley Ranch, LLP
Griff Davidson
634 Basin Creek Rd.
Butte, Mt. 59701

Montana Department of Transportation
P.O. Box 201001
Helena, Mt. 59620-1001

To Whom it May Concern :

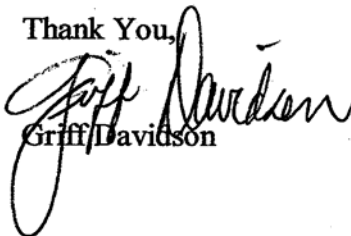
We presently own Section 18, T. 5N., R. 3W., located at the Elkhorn turnoff. If the decision is made to realign Hwy. 69 a crossed the Boulder River, our property will be greatly impacted.

The Montana Department of Transportation has defined Mt. Hwy. 69 as a rural minor arterial. In keeping with that definition the proper course of action to take would be none. Mt. Hwy. 69 is probably adequate for the purpose for which it was intended. Some say that safety is a concern and that the truck severity rate for the section of highway in question is 70 per cent greater than the state average for rural primary highways. It seems to me the most cost effective and simplest solution to this problem would be to reduce truck traffic on the highway. Posting lower speed limits, manning the temporary weigh station and aggressive enforcement will deter the high speed truck traffic and encourage those trucks to take Interstate 15.

If the decision is made to rebuild Hwy. 69, it makes sense to rebuild on the existing alignment. Fewer land owners and ranches will be impacted and the effect on property values will be less. The existing highway has fewer curves and far fewer hills than the alternative a crossed the Boulder River. Even if the alternative were constructed, I'm not sure the truckers would use it. They may continue to use the existing route because it is relatively straight and has little grade. Wetlands will be affected no matter which route is chosen, but much of what are considered wetlands on the existing highway are actually irrigation ditches. These ditches will have to be reconstructed near their present alignments as the highway is reconstructed. Hence, those "wetlands" will remain intact.

In my conversations with individuals at the Montana Department of Transportation concerning this issue I was led to believe that local public opinion was one of the major determining factors in making the decision on which alternative to use. If this is in fact the case, it seems that the plan for realignment a crossed the Boulder River is unacceptable.

Thank You,


Griff Davidson


Kimberly Davidson

MONTANA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

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NAME AND ADDRESS:

GRIFF DAVIDSON
Red Rock Valley Rock Valley
634 Basin Creek Rd.
Butte, MT 59701

COMMENTS:

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NAME AND ADDRESS:

Karen Davidson
Box 53 Basin Mt. 59631-0053
406-225-3554

COMMENTS:

Statement against rerouting Highway 69
Karen Davidson
Box 53
Basin, Mt. 931-0053
406-225-3554

My first option and the one that I would prefer is to do nothing to Highway 69 except lower the speed limit to 55 mph and enforce that and open the weigh station randomly 40 hours per week.

Next option would be to improve Highway 69 on the existing roadbed.

The idea of moving the highway across the river seems not to make any sense to me.

It would disturb an entirely new set of wet lands without mitigating the effects of the current highway on the wetlands it goes through since the current highway would remain as a frontage road.

It would divide a number of ranches even more by routing a major highway through them.

The number of access roads onto the highway would increase dramatically.

It would either cross or move five irrigation ditches.

It would directly impact more people than the existing road.

It would greatly impact wildlife and wildlife corridors.

There would probably be an increase in wildlife vehicle accidents.

It would require building two new bridges.

Currently the back road has a large number of school bus stops and the safety of those stops would be severely compromised.

The back road is often used recreationally for biking, horseback riding, sledding, drivers ed. and is an important route for moving cows and these activities would be impossible if this road becomes a major highway.

This option also does not take into account any of the current community opinions, the character of our community, or the fact that this part of the county is a rural agricultural area that would be divided and damaged by moving the highway.

Having two roads to maintain and patrol when neither is done effectively now seems like wishful thinking.

The current road is listed in "Montana Outdoors" as one of the nicest drives in Montana. Why ruin a good thing when it can be improved with little or no expense or work.

If safety is truly a concern the speed limit should be lowered and enforced.

This is a rural road and should be considered as such when thinking about what kind of traffic is being planned for and who should be using it.

Please consider these thoughts when you are planning the future of this road.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Karen Davidson". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the printed name.

Karen Davidson
Box 53
Basin, Mt 59631-0053

TO: Montana Department of Transportation

FROM: Bruce Dyer, 1184 Lower Valley Road

RE: Plan to re-route Highway 69

DATE: June 1, 2005

I have some serious concerns about your proposal to move Highway 69 onto Lower Valley Road. Though I am sure that your engineers initially felt that this was a logical solution to the problems with the existing highway, I do not feel that the full impact of this decision and all of the problems which such a change would cause were fully thought out.

First, take a look at the environmental factors. Your report states that widening the existing highway will encroach on wetlands. However, many of these so called wetlands are merely irrigation ditches. To route the highway to the other side of the valley will require crossing the Boulder river twice, which will definitely mean you will be building a new road through existing wetlands. There is simply no way to cross the river bottom without doing so. Constructing two entirely new bridges will certainly have an impact on wetlands. Leaving the road where it is will ultimately disturb the wetlands less than a move to the other side.

Also to be taken into consideration with the environment is the impact on wildlife. The gulches to the north of the river are full of elk, deer, and moose, all of which have established trails leading across Lower Valley Road to the river. Placing a highway on the north side will greatly increase the conflict between vehicles and wildlife. Along this stretch of Lower Valley Road you will also find nesting areas for bald eagles and sandhill cranes.

When one discusses environment, they must also take into consideration the humans which will be affected by any changes. There are at least 15 residences which are accessed by this portion of Lower Valley Road. These people have chosen to live in a rural area either because their means of making a living is dependent upon it, or because they prefer a rural lifestyle. Placing a busy highway on the north side of the river would completely destroy the peace, security, and privacy the residents currently enjoy.

Next, I would like to address safety. Your report sites accident statistics which are above normal for 2-lane highways in Montana. Looking at these accidents, I am sure you will find they are either caused by excessive speed or alcohol, or a combination of the two. Widening and straightening a road will not cause drivers to slow down, nor will it cause them to stop drinking. Adequate enforcement of speed limits and discouraging truck traffic will effectively lower the accident rate.

Moving the highway onto Lower Valley Road will actually create additional safety problems. Due to the far greater number of homes along the back road, there are a number of school bus stops. The greatest enemy of school busses and children are trucks traveling at high speeds. The back road is also used as a route for ranchers to move cattle and agricultural equipment. Because ranchers have the use of Lower Valley Road, they can avoid using Highway 69 for such purposes. Lower Valley Road is also used for recreational purposes. People take relaxing walks; children ride their bicycles; residents take horseback rides; kids sled on it in the winter; and many a Boulder youth has taken their first driving lesson on this road. Construction of a busy highway, with fast moving vehicles and semi-trucks, will simply make this route unsuitable and very dangerous for all of these uses.

One must also consider the terrain over which these roads were built. Though there are some sharp curves along this stretch of Highway 69, it is essentially flat. Lower Valley Road, on the other hand, is both curvy and hilly. There are a large number of approaches along Lower Valley, many of them on curves and hills. Vehicles moving at highway speeds would make access extremely hazardous.

Next, I will address some economic concerns. Your report suggests that the base under the existing highway is not suitable for its use. However, it has held up to vehicle traffic for over 50 years without any significant maintenance. Additionally, it held up to freight train traffic for many years prior to that, as Highway 69 was in fact built upon an old railroad bed. The massive effort it would take to cross the river bottom twice and completely construct a new highway along the north side of the river, as well as construct two new bridges, would certainly require significantly more money than simply widening the existing roadway.

There will also be a major economic impact on the ranchers who depend on Lower Valley Road to efficiently and safely run their operations. New construction would destroy many acres of hay and grazing land. Further, the value of the homes along this road would no doubt be substantially affected by an intrusive state highway.

Finally, I would like to address the issue of the Red Bridge. This historic structure over the Boulder river was recently refurbished at a significant expenses to taxpayers. It would appear that your proposed route for the new highway will go right through this area. Do you intend to remove this historic and beloved symbol, or merely bypass it? Either way, it would be a huge waste of the fortune recently spent on the preservation of this bridge. I believe the media would have a field day with such a blatant waste of the taxpayer's money.

I hope the State realizes that the problems associated with moving Highway 69 far outweigh any potential benefits. Your careful consideration of this matter will be much appreciated. If you would like to further discuss any of these issues, please feel free to contact me at 406-225-3590.

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NAME AND ADDRESS:

Brud Smith Box 565
Boulder, MT 59632 Ph 225-4397

COMMENTS:

See attached - Oppose Alternative
on east side of river

June 1, 2009

My name is Ned Smith. I am a fourth generation rancher living on the Lower Boulder Valley Road. Although the proposed alternative east of the river would not go through our property, I believe it would be very detrimental to ranching, wildlife and our rural community's lifestyles and interests. I am opposed to the alternative route east of the river.

From 1989 until 2000 I daily drove the Lower Valley Road from east of Boulder down to the ranch, 10 miles out. A highway along that route down to the Elkhorn bridge would wreck havoc with whitetail and mule deer and elk and the occasional bear and moose that come down from the Elkhorns to get to water and the river bottom. There isn't near the problem with Bull Mountain and wildlife on present highway 69 that there would be with rerouting. Rerouting would only cut off important wildlife corridors.

A highway on the east side would also make it very difficult in moving cattle in the spring and fall to BLM & Forest permits many of which come home on their own in the fall along the Lower Valley Road.

The rancher with the highway right through them would be devastated and probably all the adjoining property which means subdivisions, habitat fragmentation and loss of an important tax base. A local study in 2000 showed that for every dollar Jefferson County received in taxes from subdivisions it cost the County \$2.16 for local services. For open spaces and agriculture every dollar received the County spent 29¢ for service.

If safety is the driving issue for the project then something should be done about the high speed

read Smith page 140

of the reroute that use the route. Part local rancher complaints have not been addressed. Widening the road might help pull over violators but building a 55 mph designed hilly highway with an unenforced 60 mph truck 70 mph cars, will only add to the safety problem not detract. I would recommend a speed study be done of the traffic on Highway 69. And why can't something be done short of legislation to get interstate truck traffic to use the interstate. If the truck accident rate is as bad as your study shows then how is the trucking industry economically saving by speeding down Highway 69 and getting in wrecks. Maybe some safety projects in the July '9 DOT report should be considered first.

Now if the primary consideration is avoidance of environmental wetlands in reconstruction of the present route of 4.3 miles from 26.2 ft to 32 ft how do you justify opening up a brand new right of way through the same type of wetland to get to the Lower Valley Road and then back to Highway 69 at the Elkhorn bridge (Plus crossing the Boulder River twice) It would appear that there would be more environmental impact on opening new wetlands ~~than~~ in the alternative than simply widening in the present route with a highway already through it.

In conclusion I believe that consideration of the even factors that determine whether there will not be significant impact on the environment will indeed trigger a necessity for an EIS not an EA if the alternative site is considered as an option in the upcoming proposed

MONTANA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Comment Form

Project: BOULDER-SOUTH
Project Number: STPP 69-1(9)22
Control Number: CN2019

You are invited to make your comments on this form and leave it with the meeting officials or take it with you and mail it to Jeff Ebert, District Administrator, Montana Department of Transportation, PO Box 3068, Butte, MT 59702-3068 or E-mail the consultant djames@hkminc.com by July 15, 2005.

Please indicate your name, address and affiliation (if any) below. Thank you for your interest and comments on this project. Feel free to use the back and/or additional sheets of paper if necessary.

NAME AND ADDRESS: Michael A. Hertweck
3361 Hwy 69
Boulder Mt. 59632

COMMENTS: I myself would prefer the alternative of
a no build option, Three Things That I feel
would make the accident clusters safer would be:
① enforce speed limit
② put up guard rails where needed
③ mark corners with signs + flashing
lights where needed

MONTANA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

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Please indicate your name, address and affiliation (if any) below. Thank you for your interest and comments on this project. Feel free to use the back and/or additional sheets of paper if necessary.

NAME AND ADDRESS:

S. Mark Steketee
Box 566
Boulder MT 59632

COMMENTS:

I am opposed to the alternative re-route for the following reasons

1. Impact on ranches
2. Impact on residents
3. Impact on wildlife
4. Without enforcement improved the road will be more dangerous for us less dangerous for truckers.

S. Mark Steketee

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Please indicate your name, address and affiliation (if any) below. Thank you for your interest and comments on this project. Feel free to use the back and/or additional sheets of paper if necessary.

NAME AND ADDRESS:

Sabrina Steketee
Box 566
Boulder, MT

COMMENTS:

I am vehemently opposed to the alternate route. There is no advantage to the environment - there is detriment to our current and future economy and our way of life. Neither alternative addresses safety and enforcement concerns.

1184 Lower Valley Rd.
Boulder, MT. 59632
406-225-3592

6-1-05

To Whom It May Concern:

We are apposed to the idea of moving St. Rt. 69 from its presently traveled way.

There are other options that have not been considered, are less costly and keep those of us living here happy.

A very cost effective option would be to LOWER the speed limit & ENFORCE it.

This option would:

- 1) Reduce truck traffic & entice trucks to use Rt. 15 that is designed for them.
- 2) Reduce accidents along the road.
- 3) No additional impact to wetlands.
- 4) No additional safety issues. (school bus)
- 5) Reduce costs of "construction."
- 6) Maintain the financial impact of the existing road. (Hot Springs & businesses proposing to go in south of Boulder.)

I realize the sheriff's department is unable to enforce a speed limit; however, there are the new technology (cameras) that can enforce the reduced speed limit & cost much less than \$16 to \$17 million dollars.

Cathy Birtcher
Jon R. Birtcher

e-mail jbirtcher@gwest.net

THE ELKHORN WORKING GROUP

C/O HELENA AREA RESOURCE OFFICE 930 CUSTER AVE. WEST
HELENA, MT 59620

(406) 495-3260

June 1, 2005 Public Meeting Highway 69

I am Bud Smith, local owner of a mechanic repair shop here in Boulder. I have lived in Boulder and Elkhorn all of my life.

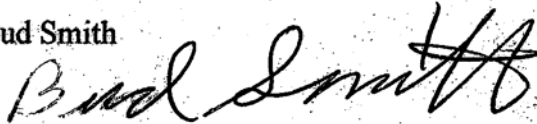
I am representing the Elkhorn Working Group that has submitted a letter in opposition to the rerouting of Highway 69 to the east side of the Boulder River. The reasons are set forth in that letter sent May 18 of this year to Mr. Ebert.

Members of the Elkhorn Working Group are from the communities surrounding the Elkhorns. The group has fourteen voting members that includes ranchers, hunters, conservationists, recreational users, and community leaders such as a county commissioner and three more non-voting members from the FW&P, Forest Service, and BLM. It should be noted that recommendations to agencies such as in our May 18 letter are made through collaborative discussions and by consensus vote.

Our recommendation had such a consensus vote reached after reviewing DOT's Preliminary Field Report and discussing the issue at two of our meetings.

I am submitting a copy of the letter as part of the record. Thank you for your consideration.

Bud Smith



Member Elkhorn Working Group

Jefferery M. Ebert, P.E., Butte District Administrator
Butte District Office
3751 Wynne Avenue
PO Box 36
Butte, MT 5702-3068

Dear Mr. Ebert:

May 18, 2005

This letter is in response to the recent proposal by the Montana Department of Transportation to change Highway 69 south of Boulder to the opposite side of the Boulder River along what is presently Lower Valley Road. These are comments by the Elkhorn Working Group after review of the Preliminary Field Report prepared by the Department of Transportation and approved by Mr. Paul Perry on August 5th, 2004.

The Elkhorn Working Group (EWG) opposes the rerouting of Highway 69 along the course of the current Lower Valley Road for the following reasons:

***A direct increase to wildlife mortality.** Every day hundreds of different animal species cross the current low traffic county road to get from the feeding grounds in the foothills to their main water source, the Boulder River. The proposed highway would increase the occurrence of wildlife/ vehicular collisions.

*** A direct increase in livestock/vehicular interactions.** Domestic livestock reside on both sides of the Lower Valley Road. When large domestic animals are hit by vehicles, lawsuits often follow. A long drawn out lawsuit can be economically devastating for ranchers. This problem would increase with the highway change as more livestock reside along the Lower Valley Road than the present Highway 69 route.

***Increased automobile accidents resulting in injuries and deaths.** The two previous bullets demonstrate the increased number of domestic animals and wildlife colliding with vehicles. Therefore, traffic injuries and fatalities will increase for all travelers on Highway 69 with the proposed highway change.

The direct affects mentioned can ultimately lead to several harmful *indirect* affects including:

The loss of ranches to subdivisions. Ranches that are not economically viable have promoted the growth of subdivisions. Subdivisions in turn cause habitat fragmentation and loss of animal populations.

The Elkhorn Working Group was created several years ago to provide cooperation and coordination between, agencies, landowners and interested parties involved in the Elkhorn Mountains. The Elkhorn Working Group acknowledges that decisions regarding public lands often impact private landowners and that good stewardship of the land serves both private and public interest, benefiting both wildlife and livestock. It is in the interest of the State of Montana to preserve and maintain successful ranching operations that ultimately support local economies. The EWG is in opposition to the proposed highway project because it would drastically alter and negatively affect wildlife and ranching operations.

We urge the Montana Department of Transportation to abandon further consideration of the proposed alternative of Highway 69.

Thank you for your consideration,

The Elkhorn Working Group

Tom William

Brad Smith

Toma E. Lythgoe

Sam Samson

C H Ryiclea

Danell Baum

David Brown

Dennis Engstrom

Jim Sorensen

David R. Baum

Paul H. Smith

Leah Compton

MONTANA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Comment Form

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Please indicate your name, address and affiliation (if any) below. Thank you for your interest and comments on this project. Feel free to use the back and/or additional sheets of paper if necessary.

NAME AND ADDRESS:

Bud Smith
Box 29 Boulder MT, 59632

COMMENTS:

ON A personal note - My home is in the town of Elkhorn AND I drive this road (Hower Valley) summer - winter - day AND night The amount of animals crossing this road is immense, to make a road so as the speed limit would be increased from present 40 mph to 70 mph would be detrimental to MAN AND BEAST. devastating
Thanks for letting me address this issue.

Bud Smith

Boulder-South

1. What top three issues spurred your interest in this meeting?

get the trucks off of Highway 69
enforce a 50 mph speed limit for
this project area

2. Do you have personal knowledge about resources that may be impacted by this project? Please describe.

man the weigh station full-time
we won't let you destroy the Old
Red Bridge!

3. Are there specific improvements to transportation facilities in the corridor that should be considered?

bike paths
pedestrian walkways
no trucks



Boulder-South

1. What top three issues spurred your interest in this meeting?

Cultural & social impact to the Valley
Environmental issues

Safety when traffic increases (esp truck traffic)

2. Do you have personal knowledge about resources that may be impacted by this project? Please describe.

Move trucks to I-15 would be
the preferred alt (No Build)

3. Are there specific improvements to transportation facilities in the corridor that should be considered?

Reduce speed limit



Boulder-South

1. What top three issues spurred your interest in this meeting?

- 1 - alternate route
- 2 - alternate route
- 3 - alternate route

2. Do you have personal knowledge about resources that may be impacted by this project? Please describe.

I live here - I know every curve and hill of the property you are considering destroying.

3. Are there specific improvements to transportation facilities in the corridor that should be considered?

Don't spend 17 million to fix a #2 problem.
Build some pullouts & use the rest to staff patrolmen - you'd have enough to keep a patrolman on the road for 100 years!



Boulder-South

1. What top three issues spurred your interest in this meeting?

I am concerned if we use alternate route we will have 2 Hi ways many Trucks & Tourists will use existing 69 making 2 Dangerous intersections

2. Do you have personal knowledge about resources that may be impacted by this project? Please describe.

3. Are there specific improvements to transportation facilities in the corridor that should be considered?



Boulder-South

1. What top three issues spurred your interest in this meeting?

Impact of Proposed Alternate 69 on Farm Community! Wildlife
Safety - Will the state do anything to slow down trucks on Hwy 6

2. Do you have personal knowledge about resources that may be impacted by this project? Please describe.

I drive 69 often. It's a beautiful road - Safety issues
may arise when I drive this road are almost always
because of semi trucks or wildlife on road

3. Are there specific improvements to transportation facilities in the corridor that should be considered?

Slow down the semi's.
Enforce speed limits

Protect wildlife by creating wildlife corridors or underpasses.



Boulder-South

1. What top three issues spurred your interest in this meeting?

1. SAFETY
2. Rancher concerns
3. TRUCK control

2. Do you have personal knowledge about resources that may be impacted by this project? Please describe.

NO

3. Are there specific improvements to transportation facilities in the corridor that should be considered?

1. Curves
2. Road width
3. Truck control



Boulder South

June 1, 2005

1. What top three issues spurred your interest in this meeting?

Safety, Protection of wetlands
Preservation of Natural beauty

2. Do you have personal knowledge about resources that may be impacted by this project? Please describe.

Local business, retail & agricultural
This area is becoming more dependent on tourism and
tourism is impacted by the existence of natural beauty
and the preservation of rural esthetic.

3. Are there specific improvements to transportation facilities in the corridor that should be considered?

greater enforcement of speed limits,

HKM
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Boulder South

June 1, 2005

1. What top three issues spurred your interest in this meeting?

- 1) Proposed re-route location, safety, loss of infrastructure
- 2) Truck speed & increased traffic due to improved road
- 3)

2. Do you have personal knowledge about resources that may be impacted by this project? Please describe.

- 1) Fault line on Boulder River
- 2) Bald Eagle habitat obstruction where alt. route crosses
- 3) Recreational use of Valley road.
- 4) Noise pollution (traffic)
- 5) Loss of scenic Hwy (existing route)

3. Are there specific improvements to transportation facilities in the corridor that should be considered?

- 1) Photo-radar systems to reduce speed.
- 2) Relocate the scale
- 3) Design Hwy and Trunkline

HKM
ENGINEERING

Boulder South

1. What top three issues spurred your interest in this meeting?

Disturbing wetlands, & the expense of "mitigation" compared to signage, patrolling, diverting trucks to I-15
Disruption of agriculture & neighbor community @ alt. rt —
This is hard to "quantify" because of how economic measures over

2. Do you have personal knowledge about resources that may be impacted by this project? Please describe.

3. Are there specific improvements to transportation facilities in the corridor that should be considered?

No build alternative w/ ways to improve safety w/o change.

HCM
ENGINEERING

things. For ex, from a "money" view, the "cost" of compensating farmers/ranchers could be relatively cheap (compared to wetlands mitigation, for ex). However, farming/ranching is marginal economically & ranchers could get discouraged & sell out & then we'd have many subdivisions & pop. growth — i.e. a community that needs the road you're building. Such a change is "calculated economically" as a plus. Yet it's a horror story for current residents & historical values.

Boulder South

1. What top three issues spurred your interest in this meeting?

- ① Alternate route coming much closer to my home. I am opposed.
- ② Raining a major game crossing & feeding ground.
- ③ Cost, paying with my tax dollars.

2. Do you have personal knowledge about resources that may be impacted by this project? Please describe.

The proposed new route will impact a major game crossing to bottom lands, that may qualify as wetlands, and cut those lands. The major impact will be to game feeding & crossing.

3. Are there specific improvements to transportation facilities in the corridor that should be considered?

Reduce speed limit & enforce with cameras.



Boulder South

1. What top three issues spurred your interest in this meeting?

Farm land between 22 + 23 mm

High-way crossing Carey Ditch between 25 + 26 mm

2. Do you have personal knowledge about resources that may be impacted by this project? Please describe.

Irrigation Ditch and center pivot next to road

3. Are there specific improvements to transportation facilities in the corridor that should be considered?



Boulder-South

1. What top three issues spurred your interest in this meeting?

- Agricultural impact
- Safety concerns - don't want high speed traffic
- Maintaining rural character, including scenic areas

2. Do you have personal knowledge about resources that may be impacted by this project? Please describe.

3. Are there specific improvements to transportation facilities in the corridor that should be considered?

- * Ban trucks
- Lower speed limit
- Enforce speed limit



Boulder-South

1. What top three issues spurred your interest in this meeting?

1. GETTING THE TRUCKS BACK ON TO INTERSTATE 15, WHERE THEY BELONG!

2. GETTING TRUCKS OFF OF HIGHWAY 69

2. Do you have personal knowledge about resources that may be impacted by this project? Please describe.

YES - I HAVE LIVED IN THIS AREA ALL OF MY LIFE

3. Are there specific improvements to transportation facilities in the corridor that should be considered?

BIKE PATHS + PEDESTRIAN WALKWAYS
ALONG EXISTING ROADS - THAT'S IT -
NO RE ROUTING ON TO BEACH



ON HIGHWAY 69 =
3. ENFORCE THE
GODDAMNED
SPEED
LIMIT
24/7
4. MOVE
THE
MERCH
STATES
24/7

Boulder-South

1. What top three issues spurred your interest in this meeting?

2. Do you have personal knowledge about resources that may be impacted by this project? Please describe.

Ranch activity, Hunters, wildlife

3. Are there specific improvements to transportation facilities in the corridor that should be considered?

I am in favor of No Build Option



Boulder-South

1. What top three issues spurred your interest in this meeting?

- ① Improvement of Hwy 69
- ② Possible relocation of road
- ③ Interest in conserving wetlands

2. Do you have personal knowledge about resources that may be impacted by this project? Please describe.

wetlands & waters along current route would be better protected by relocating road to drylands east of river.

3. Are there specific improvements to transportation facilities in the corridor that should be considered?

None known



Boulder South

Public Scoping Meeting

June 1, 2005

1. What top three issues spurred your interest in this meeting?

- 1- COST OF Relocation
- 2- FACT - Hwy 69 Old Road To still be maintained
- 3- IMPACT TO Landowners on Relocation

2. Do you have personal knowledge about resources that may be impacted by this project? Please describe.

No

3. Are there specific improvements to transportation facilities in the corridor that should be considered?

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Boulder South

Public Scoping Meeting

June 1, 2005

1. What top three issues spurred your interest in this meeting?

1. Agriculture - Economic Survival of Farm Families
2. ENVIRONMENTAL - Endangering Wildlife, Fowl, Fish, Water Quality
3. Why should they be negatively impacted to encourage traffic and international trucking.

2. Do you have personal knowledge about resources that may be impacted by this project? Please describe.

Area serves as an example of what makes Montana - Montana - Farm families
wildlife - why should a major highway
intrude on this - High speed trucks should
use the high speed inter-state.

3. Are there specific improvements to transportation facilities in the corridor that should be considered?

=

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ENGINEERING

Boulder-South

1. What top three issues spurred your interest in this meeting?

trucks rounded on the Highway to traffic
at excessive speed.
Move cattle, etc. disrupt rancher & others, recreation, wildlife

2. Do you have personal knowledge about resources that may be impacted by this project? Please describe.

3. Are there specific improvements to transportation facilities in the corridor that should be considered?

HKM
ENGINEERING

Boulder-South

1. What top three issues spurred your interest in this meeting?

Landowner

2. Do you have personal knowledge about resources that may be impacted by this project? Please describe.

river crossing

3. Are there specific improvements to transportation facilities in the corridor that should be considered?

HKM
ENGINEERING

Boulder-South

1. What top three issues spurred your interest in this meeting?

- Bisecting Ranchlands, & disrupting agricultural movement on county road.
- Ruining the Red Bridge swimming & recreation area.
- Spread of weeds from highway traffic to nearby range-land.

2. Do you have personal knowledge about resources that may be impacted by this project? Please describe.

Lifelong resident of the Boulder Valley.
Degree in Range Management.

3. Are there specific improvements to transportation facilities in the corridor that should be considered?

Permanent weigh station



Boulder-South

1. What top three issues spurred your interest in this meeting?

- Impact on fellow ranches (which will be detrimental)
- Increased traffic-negative-which will result
- Difficulties resulting for all valley residents

2. Do you have personal knowledge about resources that may be impacted by this project? Please describe.

Lifelong resident of the Boulder Valley

3. Are there specific improvements to transportation facilities in the corridor that should be considered?

Lower speed limit
weigh station that's OPEN



Boulder-South

1. What top three issues spurred your interest in this meeting?

- 1) The Alternative route being discussed, happens to run through our property.
- 2) we travel the "would be alternative" route every day with slow moving vehicles from the elk Horn bridge to the Red Bridge.
- 3) LAND taken away from ranchers.

2. Do you have personal knowledge about resources that may be impacted by this project? Please describe.

- Many agricultural fields will be divided.
wild life habitat being taken away.
Historical sites being removed.
You would also have more cattle on the Alternative route slowing down traffic.

3. Are there specific improvements to transportation facilities in the corridor that should be considered?

- widening existing route or leaving it the same way.

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Boulder-South

1. What top three issues spurred your interest in this meeting?

2. Do you have personal knowledge about resources that may be impacted by this project? Please describe.

- Lots of Ranches cut in Half and
Loss of Land

3. Are there specific improvements to transportation facilities in the corridor that should be considered?

- Guard rails, signs on corners, enforce speed limit

HCM
ENGINEERING

Boulder South

1. What top three issues spurred your interest in this meeting?

Changing the Present Road
Constructing a new Route
Safety on Hwy 69

2. Do you have personal knowledge about resources that may be impacted by this project? Please describe.

New Road would be in more of an impact zone
pertaining to animals

3. Are there specific improvements to transportation facilities in the corridor that should be considered?

Control the Traffic on 69



Boulder South

1. What top three issues spurred your interest in this meeting?

The opposition of the alternative highway
MST ~~and~~ views on road options (sincerity?)
Community impact

2. Do you have personal knowledge about resources that may be impacted by this project? Please describe.

Yes. The resource would be hay and pasture ground completely split up by the proposed alternative highway. It would eliminate water sources for a majority of pasture ground.

3. Are there specific improvements to transportation facilities in the corridor that should be considered?

The alternative route is also in floodplain area.



Boulder South

1. What top three issues spurred your interest in this meeting?

Land owner for 3+ miles of 68
own parcel @ Elkhorn turn off major impact on ranching business
Safety issues related to improved roadway

2. Do you have personal knowledge about resources that may be impacted by this project? Please describe.

Ranch access

3. Are there specific improvements to transportation facilities in the corridor that should be considered?

Fences
underpasses for livestock



Boulder South

1. What top three issues spurred your interest in this meeting?

- The alternate route through the valley which I oppose
- The potential of having 2 highways through this valley.
- Concern for ranchers & their life style

2. Do you have personal knowledge about resources that may be impacted by this project? Please describe.

- Boulder Hot Springs would no longer be ^{right off} a secondary road - this would negatively affect business.

3. Are there specific improvements to transportation facilities in the corridor that should be considered?

- Truck traffic & monitoring of speed, weight, etc.
- bike & pedestrian paths
- provide safety for wildlife



Boulder-South

1. What top three issues spurred your interest in this meeting?

social
wildlife impacts
personal

2. Do you have personal knowledge about resources that may be impacted by this project? Please describe.

Yes, I live near the red bridge & drive Hwy 69 4 days/week to whitetail.

3. Are there specific improvements to transportation facilities in the corridor that should be considered?

lower the speed limit from Elkhorn turn off to Boulder. Utilize technology to minimize impacts to wetlands & maintain the existing corridor. Maintain the beauty of the current highway.

HCM
ENGINEERING

Boulder-South

1. What top three issues spurred your interest in this meeting?

Building a new road when the existing road is more than adequate. Concern for the effects a new road would have on the aesthetic experience of driving on Highway 69 & on the property owners.

2. Do you have personal knowledge about resources that may be impacted by this project? Please describe.

Property values on some personal property.
Splitting ranch property.

3. Are there specific improvements to transportation facilities in the corridor that should be considered?

Enact & enforce a 55 mph speed limit & open the weigh station

HCM
ENGINEERING

Boulder-South

1. What top three issues spurred your interest in this meeting?

- Impact on property I own Along Alternative Route.
- Decrease in my property value Along Alternative Route.
- Impact on rural lifestyle of the Boulder Valley as more High Speed Traffic uses the new road.

2. Do you have personal knowledge about resources that may be impacted by this project? Please describe.

- Because I own land along the Alternative Route the income I generate off that property will be affected if that Route is chosen.

3. Are there specific improvements to transportation facilities in the corridor that should be considered?

- lower Speed limits
- weigh station
- greater enforcement of weight limits And Speed limits.

HCM
ENGINEERING

Boulder-South

1. What top three issues spurred your interest in this meeting?

CONCERN THAT road improvement will ~~attract~~ increased Traffic. Especially large Trucks
CONCERN about impact of new road ~~on~~ right-of-way on existing land owners.

2. Do you have personal knowledge about resources that may be impacted by this project? Please describe.

3. Are there specific improvements to transportation facilities in the corridor that should be considered?

The single biggest improvement would be to lower the Speed limit to 55 and then enforce it.

HCM
ENGINEERING

Boulder South

Public Survey

Date: 1/1/2005

1. What top three issues spurred your interest in this meeting?

Public Safety
wildlife
Public Welfare

2. Do you have personal knowledge about resources that may be impacted by this project? Please describe.

3. Are there specific improvements to transportation facilities in the corridor that should be considered?

HCM
ENGINEERING